

The Family Circle.

IF YOU WERE HERE—A SPRING SONG.

If you were here, spring's beautiful robe
Would be, I know, more beautiful still
You peach-tree, decked in pink and white,
With lace and ruffles out of sight,
Would don one other frill.

The long soft plumes the willow wears,
And silver blades for baby leaves,
Will show a greener tenderness
And dreamier, fairer slenderness,
A-drooping 'gainst the eaves.

The starlike blooms that burst and spread
Such brilliance in our garden beds
Would waste more wealth of hue, I ween,
If now and then you might be seen
Just bending o'er their heads.

And all the music spring doth make
With stirring leaf and young bird throats
Would prove a richer pean, dear,
If you were here, if you were here,
To lend your sweet voice notes.

Ah how adjustment fails to be!
E'en spring-time heeds in part the pain—
And Compensation's pensive task
To bring the gifts we need, not ask,
Will teach us once again

—Sarah S. McEnery, in *Harper's Bazar*.

A DOCTOR OF THE OLD SCHOOL.

BY IAN MACLAREN.

Drumtochty was accustomed to break every law of health, except wholesome food and fresh air, and yet had reduced the Psalmist's farthest limit to an average life-rate. Our men made no difference in their clothes for summer or winter, Drumsheugh and one or two of the larger farmers condescending to a topcoat on Sabbath, as a penalty of their position, and without regard to temperature. They wore their blacks at a funeral, refusing to cover them with anything, out of respect to the deceased, and standing longest in the kirkyard when the north wind was blowing across a hundred miles of snow. If the rain was pouring at the Junction, then Drumtochty stood two minutes longer through sheer native dourness till each man had a cascade from the tail of his coat, and hazarded the suggestion, half way to Kildrummie, that it had been "a bit scrowie"; a "scrowie" being as far short of a "shoor" as a "shoor" fell below "weel."

This sustained defiance of the elements provoked occasional judgments in the shape of a "hoast" (cough), and the head of the house was then exhorted by his women folk to "change his feet" if he had happened to walk through a burn on his way home, and was pestered generally with sanitary precautions. It is right to add that the gentleman treated such advice with contempt, regarding it as suitable for the effeminacy of towns, but not seriously intended for Drumtochty. Sandy Stewart "napped" stones on the road in his shirt sleeves, wet or fair, summer and winter, till he was persuaded to retire from active duty at eighty-five, and he spent ten years more in regretting his hastiness and criticizing his successor. The ordinary course of life, with fine air and contented minds, was to do a full share of work till seventy, and then to look after "orra" (odd) jobs well into the eighties, and "slip awa" within sight of ninety. Persons above ninety were understood to be acquitting themselves with credit, and assumed airs of authority, brushing aside the opinions of seventy as immature, and confirming their conclusions with illustrations drawn from the end of last century.

When Hillocks' brother so far forgot himself as to "slip awa" at sixty, that worthy man was scandalized, and offered laboured explanations at the "beeral."

"It's an awfu' business ony way ye look at it, an' a sair trial tae us a'. A never heard tell o' sic a thing in oor family afore, an' it's no easy accountin' for't."

"The gudewife was sayin' he was never the same sin' a weel nicht he lost himself on the muir and slept below a bush; but that's neither here nor there. A'm thinkin' he sappit his constitution thae twa years he

* From "Beside the Bonnie Briar Bush," published by Fleming Revell Co., Toronto.

wes grieve steward, about England. That wes thirty years syne, but ye're never the same aifter thae foreign climates."

Drumtochty listened patiently to Hillocks' apologia, but was not satisfied.

"It's clean havers about the muir. Losh keeps Lord keep us, we've a' sleepit out and never been a hair the waur."

"A' admit that England might hae dune the job, it's no cannie stravagin' (strolling) yon wy frae place to place, but Drums never complained tae me as if he hed been nippit in the Sooth."

The parish had, in fact, lost confidence in Drums after his wayward experiment with a potato-digging machine, which turned out a lamentable failure, and his premature departure confirmed our vague impression of his character.

"He's away noo," Drumsheugh summed up, after opinion had time to form, "an' there were waur fouk than Drums, but there's nae doot he wes a wee flichty."

When illness had the audacity to attack a Drumtochty man, it was described as a "whup," and was treated by the men with a fine negligence. Hillocks was sitting in the post office one afternoon when I looked in for my letters, and the right side of his face was blazing red. His subject of discourse was the prospects of the turnip "breer," but he casually explained that he was waiting for medical advice.

"The gudewife is keepin' up a ding-dong frae mornin' till nicht aboot ma face, and a'm fair deaved (deafened), so a'm watchin' for MacLure tae get a bottle as he comes wast (west); yon's him noo."

The doctor made his diagnosis from horseback on sight, and stated the result with that admirable clearness which endeared him to Drumtochty.

"Confoond ye, Hillocks, what are ye ploiterin' aboot here for in the weel wi' a face like a boiled beet? Div ye no ken that ye've a titch o' the rose (erysipelas), and ocht tae be in the hoose? Gae hame wi' ye afore a' leave the bit, and send a haffin (half-grown; a child) for some medicine. Ye donnered idiot, are ye ettlin' (intending) tae follow Drums afore yir time?" And the medical attendant of Drumtochty continued his invective till Hillocks started, and still pursued his retreating figure with medical directions of a simple and practical character.

"A'm watchin', an' peety ye if ye pit aff time. Keep yir bed the mornin', and dinna show yir face in the fields till a' see ye. A'll gie ye a cry on Monday—sic an auld fule—but there's no ane o' them tae mind anither in the hale parish."

Hillocks' wife informed the kirkyaird that the doctor "gied the gudeman an awfu' clearin'," and that Hillocks "wes keepin' hoose," which meant that the patient had tea breakfast, and at that time was wandering about the farm buildings in an easy undress with his head in a plaid.

It was impossible for a doctor to earn even the most modest competence from a people of such scandalous health, and so MacLure had annexed neighbouring parishes. His house—little more than a cottage—stood on the roadside among the pines towards the head of our Glen, and from this base of operations he dominated the wild glen that broke the wall of the Grampians above Drumtochty—where the snow-drifts were twelve feet deep in winter, and the only way of passage at times was the channel of the river—and the moorland district westwards till he came to the Dunleith sphere of influence, where there were four doctors and a hydropathic. Drumtochty in its length, which was eight miles, and its breadth, which was four, lay in his hand; besides a glen behind, unknown to the world, which in the night time he visited at the risk of life, for the way thereto was across the big moor with its peat holes and treacherous bogs. And he held the land eastward towards Muirtown so far as Geordie. The Drumtochty post travelled every day, and could carry word that the doctor was wanted. He did his best for the

need of every man, woman, and child in this wild, straggling district, year in, year out, in the snow and in the heat, in the dark and in the light, without rest, and without holiday for forty years.

One horse could not do the work of this man, but we liked best to see him on his old white mare, who died the week after her master, and the passing of the two did our hearts good. It was not that he rode beautifully, for he broke every canon of art, flying with his arms, stooping till he seemed to be speaking into Jess's ears, and rising in the saddle beyond all necessity. But he could ride faster, stay longer in the saddle, and had a firmer grip with his knees, than any one I ever met, and it was all for mercy's sake. When the reapers in harvest time saw a figure whirling past in a cloud of dust, or the family at the foot of Glen Urtach, gathered round the fire on a winter's night, heard the rattle of a horse's hoofs on the road, or the shepherds, out after the sheep, traced a black speck moving across the snow to the upper glen, they knew it was the doctor, and, without being conscious of it, wished him God speed.

Before and behind his saddle were strapped the instruments and medicines the doctor might want, for he never knew what was before him. There were no specialists in Drumtochty, so this man had to do everything as best he could, and as quickly. He was a chest doctor and a doctor for every other organ as well, he was accoucher and surgeon; he was oculist and aurist; he was dentist and chloroformist, besides being chemist and druggist. It was often told how he was far up Glen Urtach when the feeders of the threshing mill caught young Burnbrae, and how he only stopped to change horses at his house, and galloped all the way to Burnbrae, and flung himself off his horse and amputated the arm, and saved the lad's life.

"You wud hae thoct that every meenut was an hour," said Jamie Soutar, who had been at the threshing, "an' a'll never forget the puir lad lyin' as white as deith on the floor o' the loft, wi' his head on a sheaf, an' Burnbrae baudin' the bandage ticht an' prayin' a' the while, and the mither greetin' in the corner."

"Will he never come?" she cries, an' a' heard the sound o' the horse's feet on the road a mile awa in the frosty air.

"The Lord be praised!" said Burnbrae, and a' slippit doon the ladder as the doctor came skeelpin' intae the close, the foam fleein' fra his horse's mouth.

"What is he?" was a' that passed his lips, an' in five meenuts he hed him on the feedin' board, and wes at his wark—sic wark, neeburs—but he did it weel. An ae "long a' thoct rael thocht" o' him: he first sent aff the laddie's mither tae get a bed ready.

"Noo that's finished, and his constitution 'll dae the rest," and he carried the lad doon the ladder in his arms like a bairn, and laid him in his bed, and waits aside him till he wes sleepin', and then says he: "Burnbrae, yir a gey lad never tae say 'Collie, will ye lick?' for a' hevna tasted meat for sixteen hoors."

"It was mighty tae see him come intae the yaird that day, neeburs; the verra look o' him wes victory."

Jamie's cynicism slipped off in the enthusiasm of his reminiscence, and he expressed the feeling of Drumtochty. No one sent for MacLure save in great straits, and the sight of him put courage in sinking hearts. But this was not by the grace of his appearance, or the advantage of a good bedside manner. A tall, gaunt, loosely made man, without an ounce of superfluous flesh on his body, his face burnt a dark brick color by constant exposure to the weather, red hair and beard turning gray, honest blue eyes that looked you ever in the face, huge hands with wrist bones like the shank of a ham, and a voice that hurled his salutations across two fields, he suggested the moor rather than the drawing-room. But what a clever hand it was in an operation, as deli-

cate as a woman's, and what a kindly voice it was in the humble room where the shepherd's wife was weeping by her man's bedside. He was "ill pitten thegither" to begin with, but many of his physical defects were the penalties of his work, and endeared him to the Glen. That ugly scar cut into his right eyebrow and gave him such a sinister expression, was got one night Jess slipped on the ice and laid him insensible eight miles from home. His limp marked the big snowstorm in the fifties, when his horse missed the road in Glen Urtach, and they rolled together in a drift. MacLure escaped with a broken leg and the fracture of three ribs, but he never walked like other men again. He could not swing himself into the saddle without making two attempts and holding Jess's mane. Neither can you "warstle" through the peat bogs and snow drifts for forty winters without a touch of rheumatism. But they were honorable scars, and for such risks of life men get the Victoria Cross in other fields. MacLure got nothing but the secret affection of the Glen, which knew that none had ever done one-tenth as much for it as this old, gainly, twisted, battered figure, and I have seen a Drumtochty face soften at the sight of MacLure limping to his horse.

Mr. Hopps earned the ill-will of the Glen forever by criticising the doctor's dress, and indeed it would have filled any townsman with amazement. Black he wore once a year, on sacrament Sunday, and, if possible, at a funeral; topcoat or water proof never. His jacket and waistcoat were rough homespun of Glen Urtach wool, which threw off the wet like a duck's back, and below he was clad in shepherd's tartan trousers, which disappeared into unpolished riding boots. His shirt was grey flannel, and he was uncertain about a collar, but certain as to a tie which he never had, his beard doing instead, and his hat was soft felt of four colors and seven different shapes. His point of distinction in dress was the trousers, and they were the subject of endless speculation.

"Some threep (declare) that he's worn thae cedential pair the last twenty year, an' a' mind masel (myself) his gettin' a ter ahint, when he was crossin' oor palin, and the mend's still visible."

"Ithens declare 'at he's got a wab o' claiith, and hes a new pair made in Muirtown aince in the twa year mabe, and keeps them in the garden till the new look ween aff."

"For ma ain pairt," Soutar used to declare, "a canna make up my mind, but there's ae thing sure; the Glen wud ae like tae see him without them; it wud be a shock tae confidence. There's no mock o' the check left, but ye can aye tell it, and when ye see thae brecks comin' in ye ken that if human poer can save yir bairn's life it 'll be dune."

The confidence of the Glen—and tributary states—was unbounded, and rested partly on long experience of the doctor's resources, and partly on his hereditary connection.

"His father was here afore him," Mr. Macfadyen used to explain; "atween them they've hed the countryside for weel on a century; if MacLure disna understan oor constitution, wha dis, a' wud like to ask?"

For Drumtochty had its own constitution and a special throat disease, as became a parish which was quite self-contained between the woods and the hills, and not dependent on the lowlands either for its diseases or its doctors.

"He's a skilly man, Doctor MacLure," continued my friend Mrs. Macfadyen, "his judgment on sermons or anything else wes seidom at fault; 'an' a' kindhearted, though o' coorse he hes his faults like us, an' he disna tribble the Kirk often."

"He aye can tell what's wrong wi' a body, an' mainly he can put ye richt, and there's nae new-fangled wys wi' him; a blister for the outside an' Epsom salts for the inside dis his wark, an' they say there's no an herb on the hills he disna ken."